TESL REPORTER

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY — HAWAII
Volume 23, Number 1 • Laie, Hawaii • January 1990

TESL Reporter
BYUH Box 1830
Laie, Hawaii 96762-1294

ISSN 0886-0661

A quarterly publication of the Language, Literature, and Communications Division of Brigham Young University—Hawaii

Subscriptions are available on a complimentary basis to individuals and institutions involved in the teaching of English as a second/foreign language. Requests for new subscriptions and change of address notification for continuing subscriptions should be sent to the circulation manager.

Manuscripts relevant to teaching English as a second/foreign language, bilingual education, intercultural education and communication, and teacher-preparation in these areas are welcomed and should be submitted (in duplicate) to the editor. Manuscripts dealing with classroom aspects of teaching are especially encouraged.

Manuscripts should be typed and double spaced throughout, generally not exceeding ten pages. Each manuscript should be accompanied by a cover sheet with the title; author's name, position, and address; and a short (less than 50 words) bio-data statement. Identifying information should not appear elsewhere in the manuscript in order to insure an impartial review.

It is expected that manuscripts submitted to the *TESL Reporter* are neither previously published nor being considered for publication elsewhere.

Reviews of recent textbooks, resource materials, tests, and non-print materials (films, tapes, or computer software) are also invited. Potential reviewers who indicate a particular area of interest to the review editor will be contacted concerning recent titles in that area.

Advertising information is available from the business manager.

Abstracts of articles published in the *TESL Reporter* appear in *Language and Language Behavior Abstracts*.

The opinions and statements expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or of Brigham Young University—Hawaii.

Developing Extensive Reading Skills with Culturally Relevant Folktales

Kevin Stuart, Qinghai Education College

In China, where I have wrestled with the task of teaching English for six years, extensive reading is rarely taught, in the true sense of the word, in many college/university departments devoted to the teaching of English. Frequently, teachers employ a text which they painfully inch through during one or more terms.

Intensive and extensive reading courses are seen by the student as being the same. The former course is theoretically an exercise in grammar, sentence structure, and shades of meaning, while the latter course is intended to develop general reading skills, the ability to read quickly, and an ability to grasp main meanings.

Many students faced with distasteful job assignments (i.e., middle school teaching where little knowledge of English is actually required) quickly lose interest in English and find they need to do virtually no reading outside of class--the teacher will explain all, sentence by sentence in class. This is particularly common in colleges and universities outside such major metropolitan areas as Beijing and Shanghai.

The Need for Extensive Reading

This painful situation is exacerbated when foreign teachers suddenly appear on the scene with images dancing in their heads of third or fourth year Chinese English majors having virtually the same command of English as do native speakers of the same age. This is especially true of veteran foreign college teachers who have had no prior experience teaching ESL. Such teachers are frequently asked to teach 'American Literature' and 'British Literature.' Foreign teachers may then ask students to read as much as one long short story per class drawn from numerous anthologies of American/British literature currently being published in China. Such readings may be seasoned with lectures by the foreign teacher (desperately trying to fill up the standard two hour class period) on various aspects of literary thought, genres, and history--in short a reproduction of what they would do if asked to teach a class of native speakers. Depending on the sensitivity of the teacher, more or less time may pass before he or she realizes students' eyes are open but their brains have been lulled into a near comatose state by a host of culturally unfamiliar terms and illusions in addition to simply not being able to come to terms with such long reading assignments. Often students are not even able to follow events in the story, let alone comprehend a discussion of point of view, elements of plot, symbolism, style, and theme.

Building Students' Confidence in Extensive Reading

What I have found useful is first to accustom students to reading extensively. Several Chinese cooperators and I have prepared a lengthy manuscript of translated Chinese folk tales which I assign as reading material for the first few weeks,

gradually increasing the number of pages for each reading assignment.

Fifteen minutes or so of each class are also devoted to small group work. In these groups, students retell the story they have read. (This may be the only time most students actually speak English.)

The final grade in the course (the only thing that interests many students) is solely dependent on quizzes during each class period over the assigned reading. These quizzes seek simply to ascertain whether or not the student has read the material. Some students, of course, balk at reading anything outside of class—old habits die hard—but many students discover for the first time that far from being an enemy, an assignment of quickly reading many pages of written English can be what they thought it never could be--something they can understand and identify with.

Advantages of Reading Folktales

The reading of folktales is especially appropriate in colleges where a sizable portion of the students are from the countryside. For example, I presently teach students who graduated from English programs in county-level three-year normal schools, taught in middle schools for three years, and now mostly in their early twenties have come to Qinghai Education College for an additional two years of study. Virtually all of these students were raised in peasant villages and from a very early age have been accustomed to hearing folktales, often told by a grandparent as a means of entertaining children. Thus, reading folktales drawn from their own culture, which many of them are intimately familiar with, brings back a host of pleasant associations and hopefully, a new appreciation of English.

Outcomes

After students have actually developed confidence in reading English in reasonably large doses, the teacher may move on to simplified popular novels in English, then to those which have not been simplified, and then finally take the plunge into something on the order of American and/or British literature.

A number of pitfalls remain in rendering the writings of men and women from a very different Western culture comprehensible to students who may have received little if any coursework in the basics of Western culture. But at the least, students will have learned that written English is capable of giving them something other than a headache.

About the Author

Kevin Stuart is a foreign expert at Qinghai Education College in Xining, Quinghai Province in the People's Republic of China.

Using "Non-Existent Student" Essays as a Way of Encouraging Student Revisions

Gerhardt Gast, Hawaii Pacific University

In their article "Investigating Reformulation as a Practical Strategy for the Teaching of Academic Writing," Allwright, Woodley and Allwright (1988) discuss the use of what they call a "reformulation strategy." This strategy is to take a student paper and then have a native speaker, who is neither the students' study skills teacher nor a prospective tutor, read the paper. The native speaker tries to understand the paper to the best of his or her ability, and then rewrites the paper "where absolutely necessary, in a form natural to the native speaker. This may involve making changes at all levels, but the point of any such changes must be to bring out the original writer's probable intentions, not to deliberately substitute a new set of intentions for them." Copies of both versions are made, and the anonymously authored papers are distributed to the entire class. The class then speculates collectively on the probable reasons *for* and effects *of* the changes by the native speaker. Allwright et al. (1988) state that the most important reason for engaging in this activity is to cause the students to reflect on their own writing and to consider the implications for future work.

A Modified Reformulation Strategy

I use reformulation strategies in my writing classes, but with several major differences from the method used by Allwright et al. This paper will discuss those differences and the techniques used in implementing these reformulations in an intermediate ESL writing class and in an ESL computer-assisted writing lab.

Teacher-Authored Essays

Allwright et al. use a paper written by a student in their class to reformulate. Initially, I used student papers in class; however, like Allwright et al, I found that students often volunteered or "confessed" their authorship. Even without the authors' volunteering their identity, many of the students recognized the writing of a particular student because of content or discussions with the author. This tended to put the authors in a position of defending their papers. They felt singled out and embarrassed. Often, they became very defensive or completely passive, feeling that they were obliged to make every change suggested. Although there was no evidence, I suspect that some students altered their comments in class when the authorship was known. Students can be ruthless or overly supportive when critical action is called for concerning peer work.

To alleviate the problem of putting authors "on-the-spot," I write several "non-existent student" essays. Some are native-speaker-like and some are written with common grammatical, mechanical, organizational, usage or construction problems that are typical of the class. This can help the teacher to focus on certain problems in a controlled environment. For example, using a native-speaker-like essay, paragraphs can be intentionally

written in the wrong order. This is particularly useful if the writers in the class are concentrating on surface level problems. If the students cannot find sentence level problems when asked if there are changes that they would make to the paper, their attention may be redirected to content and organization. A "non-existent student" essay can be constructed with both heavy spelling or grammatical problems along with organizational problems. This will allow the teacher to show how these surface level problems are of secondary importance in the initial drafting stages of an essay. The teacher can direct the discussion to uncover the organizational problems first and postpone attending to surface level errors. This will help the students to establish a hierarchical order of writing needs. The essay can be useful as well when it comes time for modeling final editing.

In-Class Reformulation

Allwright et al. (1988) have a native speaker reformulate the student essay; however, this may suggest that the only hope for the student is to have a native speaker rewrite the paper in order to "get it right" in regards to grammar, mechanics, and meaning. When students do the reformulating themselves, they learn that they are capable of "getting it right" themselves. The purpose for class reformulation is similar to that of Allwright et al.'s reformulation strategy in that it is designed to promote class discussion and investigate possible revisions. The carry-over helps the students to consider their own writing in light of the suggestions raised in the class discussions. The teacher can be used as a resource when students are confused; however, the students will often come up with a suitable solution in the open class discussion.

Medium of Presentation

The last difference between my reformulation strategies and that of Allwright et al.'s, is in how I present the essay for class discussion. Because my regular writing class and my computer-assisted writing class use different writing mediums, I use different techniques in presenting the essays. In my class where the writing medium is a pencil and paper, I present a "non-existent student" essay by making a transparency of the essay and projecting the essay on a screen using an overhead projector. (Allwright et al. hand out individual copies of the essays.) The overhead image causes the students to focus on the essay as directed by the instructor. The idea that the reformulation is a group effort is emphasized. Using an overhead transparency pen, I make comments on the transparency as suggested by the class. Particularly interesting or well-written parts are noted first, followed by areas needing development, deletion, or explanation.

In my computer-assisted writing lab, I write non-existent student essays on the word processor. I use one essay (a narrative) to model for the class using an overhead data display device. This device allows what is on the computer screen to be projected on a large movie screen so that the whole class can easily read the text together. If a data display device is unavailable, a large monitor will work. When the essay is displayed, the class reads the essay and then discusses revisions or changes that they would

make. This essay is written in native-speaker English. Since the story is deliberately constructed to be vague and skimpy in details, the class is encouraged to fill out the story and make it more interesting. As they make and agree on suggestions in the class discussion, I make the revisions from the keyboard. In this manner, students can see how easy it is to make deep content changes while revising on the computer. A second narrative essay is distributed, and students copy it onto the computer. Using this method, I have seen substantial content revisions, and considerable increases in the amount of text. In one narrative of 157 words, the average length of student revised text (n=14) was 467 words, an increase of 297%. One essay in my class of 14 was 703 words: an increase of 448% from the original essay. Below is the first paragraph of the teacher written "non-existent student" essay followed by two examples of student revision.

"Non-existent student" version:

Tom is leaving Hawaii Pacific University. He has just finished class and is free for the rest of the day. He wants to meet his friends in Waikiki. Tom's girlfriend is waiting for Tom at the bus stop.

Student A:

Tom is leaving Hawaii Pacific University. He has just finished his all classes and is free for the rest of the day although he has a lot of homework. However, he doesn't want to do it in that day because it's Friday. Why he has to stay home. there is no reason to stay. At first, he wants to meet his friends in Waikiki. Tom's girlfriend, Liz is waiting for Tom at the bus stop. Since they haven't seen each other for a long time, Tom misses Liz so much. When he finds her at the bus stop, he starts running toward her; however, he slipped on the ground and jeans are torn. Everybody laughs at him even Liz. Tom is embarrassed and he can't look up his face because he is shamed. When Tom comes up to Liz, she is still laughing, so Tom is getting angry. Tom seems to be so embarrassed, so Liz stops laughing.

Student B:

Tom was waiting the class would be over. He had been thinking of his pretty girl, Kathy. When the class was over, he rushed out the room to go to the bus stop in front of Long's Drug where kathy is waiting him for.

Although the second student's paragraph is shorter, the revisions include tense and exact wording changes. Revisions occurred at many levels. Some students seemed to stay with the basic story and add detail, while others completely rewrote the story with the text becoming quite elaborate. The "non-existent student essay" seemed to invite the generation of ideas, and promoted revision. I had to force my students off the computers when class was over.

A Follow-Up Activity

A follow up to this activity is to have students read each other's hard copy drafts, make written comments, and then, make collaborative revisions while on line. This activity helps the students feel less fearful of making content revisions on their own "real" essays.

Benefits of This Strategy

Teachers can use "non-existent student" essays to eliminate the pressure student authors feel when their essays are scrutinized, to focus on particular aspects of writing, to develop a sense of hierarchical writing needs in students, to build confidence in the students by showing that they are capable of "getting it right" by themselves, and to show students that reformulations are easily accomplished. Writing a "non-existent student" essay is easily done with a little practice, and the benefits make this strategy worth exploring.

Reference

Allwright, R.L., M.P. Woodley, and J.M. Allwright. (1988). Investigating reformulation as a practical strategy for the teaching of academic writing. *Applied Linguistics*. 9, 236-255.

Author's note: I would like to thank Carol Perrin and Martha Pennington for their help in refining this paper.

About the Author

Gerhard Gast is an instructor for the English Foundations Program at Hawaii Pacific University. He is doing graduate work in the Department of ESL at the University of Hawaii. He is currently working with Martha Pennington and Steve Singer on The Computer Revolution, *software/text for ESL word*

Call for Contributions to IAL's First Roundtable

Issues in Applied Linguistics is a new semi-annual professional journal undertaken by graduate students in the Department of TESL/Applied Linguistics at UCLA. The second issue will feature a Roundtable which will provide a forum for responses to the following questions: What is applied linguistics? What should applied linguistics be?

Practitioners, researchers, and students are invited to answer one or both of these questions from any philosophical, theoretical, or practical angle. It is hoped that contributions will spark discussions to deal with the issue of definition of the field of applied linguistics.

Responses must not exceed 500 words and should be postmarked no later than September 30, 1990. Please include a separate 50-word bio-statement. Contact Maria Egbert, Special Features Editor, Issues in Applied Linguistics, TESL/Applied Linguistics, 3300 Rolfe Hall, 405 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, California 90024-1531; Electronic mail address: IHW1037@UCLAMVS.BITNET

Grammar in Action 2: An Illustrated Workbook

Review by Ronald R. Corio, Ohio University

GRAMMAR IN ACTION 2: AN ILLUSTRATED WORKBOOK. Barbara H. Foley with Gretchen M. Dowling. New York: Newbury House, 1990, pp. ix + 147.

Grammar in Action 2 from Newbury House is the second of a three-book series of grammar workbooks for young adult and adult ESL/EFL students. The series progresses from the beginner level in Book 1 to the low-intermediate level in Book 3. Book 2 is geared for high beginning level students and for those unfamiliar with formal grammar.

Grammar in Action 2 is divided into 24 units. Each unit focuses around a picture of an everyday scene or activity and uses this focus to address a particular grammar point. There are approximately eight exercises in each unit; half of them are designed as vocabulary and oral response exercises, the other half as written exercises. In the final exercise of each unit the target structure is used in a reading passage.

Unit 5, "The Backyard," for example, addresses the future "will" and focuses on a drawing of a couple standing on the back deck of their house—he with his fishing gear and she with a list of house and yard chores which are obvious from the picture. She doesn't appear to be too happy and he has a sheepish look—no doubt because his buddies who are waiting for him are witnessing him being lectured. In the first exercise the learner must select a word or phrase from four groups to form sentences like "I won't mow the lawn today." In the next exercise the learner chooses "it" or "them" from a sequence like: "The lawn is high. David will cut (it them)." Two similar exercises follow in the vocabulary and oral response section of the unit. In the first of four writing exercises the learner is given ten verbs and must use the "will" future with one of them to complete a sentence like: "David _____ the back steps tomorrow." These exercises expand until the learner is writing full-sentence responses. The questions in the final exercise are based upon a short text.

Each unit ends with grammar summary charts that show the target structure and give examples. Some of these charts provide references to specific exercises. An appendix of 33 past tense verbs is provided.

Each unit is self-contained and independent of the others. Teachers concerned about the order of presentation of grammatical structures can use the units of *Grammar in Action 2* in whatever sequence they prefer. The order of grammatical structures in the book follows that of Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982: 208) acquisition hierarchy model with the exception of the possessive, which is presented much earlier in *Grammar in Action 2*.

The use of a picture about an everyday scene or activity gives a thematic approach

to the target grammar structure. This contextual focus gives the exercises a unity and coherence that makes them more effective. Context alone, however, is not enough to motivate and interest learners. They become interested when the context has meaning for them and lamentably that is absent in *Grammar in Action 2*. The communicative language teacher will be challenged to give meaning to these contexts.

Since reference to the picture is needed for many of the exercises, a constant flipping back to the picture is annoying. Foley and Dowling have addressed this problem in some units by providing additional illustrations. The grammar summary charts at the end of each unit—the strong point of *Grammar in Action 2*—are well laid out to provide a helpful reference, including examples, for the target structure. Students will appreciate this feature.

From the learner's point of view the major problem with *Grammar in Action 2* is the repetitive drill work. The oral and written patterned responses lack the meaningfulness required to motivate learners. A case in point is a writing exercise in Unit 1 in which the learner chooses from the prepositions *in*, *on*, and *at* to complete ten sentences about the occupants of a cutaway view of a five-story office building. A creative teacher can easily develop an exercise with the students and the classroom setting to accomplish the same objectives in a more meaningful and more interesting way.

The communicative approach to language teaching of the seventies and eighties was in part a reaction to the rote learning aspect of audiolingualism. "Meaningful" and "authentic" have become methodological buzzwords, and classroom activities have become more interesting. Newbury House touts the *Grammar in Action* series as providing grammar practice for the "active learner-centered classroom" (*TESOL Newsletter* 24:2, April 1990, p. 12) and as motivating student discussion. The communicative language teacher looking for these features will be disappointed in *Grammar in Action 2*.

Reference

Dulay, Heidi, Marina Burt, and Stephen Krashen. (1982). *Language two*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ronald R. Corio, a graduate student in the TESL program at Ohio University, previously taught ESL in Costa Rica while a member of the U.S. Peace Corps.

Adjustment of Arab Students to University Life in the United States

Christine F. Meloni, George Washington University

The Arab countries continue to send a large number of students to study in U.S. universities every year. It is, therefore, important for university administrators and faculty to be familiar with salient characteristics of Arab culture so that they can facilitate the adjustment of Arab students to life in the United States of America.

The study described below was undertaken to determine how Arab students in one American university viewed their experience of adaptation.

Subjects

The subjects were 29 Arab students enrolled in the English for International Students Program at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The distribution according to country and sex is presented in Table I. These subjects were students in the author's EFL classes at the time of the study. They provided information about their personal experiences living and studying in the United States which should prove useful to EFL instructors and other university personnel who come into contact with students from Arab countries.

Data Collection

Two means were used to collect the data for the study, a questionnaire and student dialogue journal entries.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire with 12 questions was prepared by the author and administered to the subjects. Most of the students responded to the questionnaire orally and this process took an average of two hours per student. Some students were pressed for time and preferred to complete the questionnaire on their own in writing.

Dialogue Journal Entries

The author analyzed the dialogue journals of the Arab students in her classes, looking in particular for references relevant to the questions posed by the study.

Table I. Characteristics of Subjects in Study

COUNTRY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Saudi Arabia	10	3	13
Kuwait	6	2	8
Egypt	3	1	4
Iraq	3	1	4
TOTAL	22	7	29

Dialogue journal writing is a reading/ writing exchange between two individuals. The students in the author's classes wrote in their journals for fifteen minutes at the beginning of each class period. The author then collected the journals and responded to them outside of class.

This journal writing was part of the course work; the author did not institute it specifically for the study. The students were free to write on any topic they chose, and there was no attempt by the author to direct their writing in any way.

Results

The responses to the questionnaire questions are given below. When relevant, comments from the dialogue journals are added. (While spelling errors have been corrected, no other changes have been made in reporting the student writing.)

Question #1: Did anything shock or surprise you when you first arrived in the United States?

Many of the students responded in the negative because they were already familiar with U.S. culture through movies and television programs shown in their own countries. Several students had also taken trips to Europe which they felt prepared them for the Western way of life.

Some students, however, were surprised or shocked by particular aspects of U.S. life. Aspects that impressed them were the wide use of computers, the variety of ethnic groups, the long bridges, and the large size of some U.S. cities. Features that shocked them were the amount of crime, the leniency shown toward criminals, the density of traffic, the perceived discrimination against Blacks, the materialism, and the attempts to 'rip off' foreigners.

Question #2: Have you had any problems adjusting to life in the United States?

The students listed several problems they had encountered. Loneliness was frequently mentioned. Most were living alone for the first time in their lives and they found it difficult to be independent. They missed their families and their friends. Furthermore, they experienced problems in associating with Americans, particularly because of insufficient English language skills.

In regard to language, one student wrote the following entry in his dialogue journal:

> When I reached this country I was very happy but the language was very difficult for us. So I became unhappy. Because I went to the doctor I couldn't explain to him how I felt.

This same student mentioned another source of unhappiness, his tremendous frustration in buying a car.

> When I bought a car I couldn't understand the system of this country. So I felt I wanted to go back to my country again. But I can't because our government ordered us to stay here for nine months. So I will try to understand everything about this country.

Trying to adjust to American food was a common problem. In particular, there were objections to frozen food and junk food.

The difficulty of finding an apartment was frequently cited. One student mentioned that not only was it difficult to find an apartment but once one was found the contract was very complicated and therefore confusing. He was very surprised at the need for a two-month deposit and other regulations. He was, furthermore, disturbed that a penalty was imposed if the rent was late as such a practice is forbidden in his religion.

How to cope with winter weather was another serious concern of many students. One Saudi wrote the following entry in his journal:

> Mrs. Meloni, I want your advice please. We know that after a month from now the weather will be colder and the snow will fall down. That thing is very strange for me. So I want to know what I can do. I think I can't drive my car when the snow falls down. How can I come to GW? I think maybe I will stay home most of the time.

One of the Saudi women remarked that her greatest problem was adjusting to a classroom with male and female students together. (In her own country there is separation at all levels of education.) She feared men and found it upsetting to be in the same class with them.

Question #3: What differences have you found between the people in your country and the American people?

The answers to this question were not particularly complimentary to Americans.

The three Iraqi males felt that their people were more "humanitarian." When asked to explain further, they said that in Iraq there were better "human relations" among people. Iraqis were more helpful with friends and strangers than Americans were.

The Saudis emphasized differences in the concept of family between Saudi Arabia and the United States. One Saudi male said that he found family relations in the United States "almost zero." Another noted that Saudi children had a great deal more respect for their parents. Children of any age liked to be with their parents because "parents always have something to teach their children."

The Saudis also commented on differences in the concept of friendship. One remarked that money and materialism seemed more important than friendship to Americans. Another Saudi said, "An American would kill a friend to get back a penny owed him."

The Egyptians also referred to the difference in family and friendship ties. One commented that the American family was "very loose," while it was "very tight in Egypt."

The Egyptian woman remarked that in the United States people did not know their neighbors. She herself lived in an eight-story apartment building in Cairo and she knew not only everyone on her floor and throughout the building but also her neighbors in the buildings across the street.

Question #4. What differences are there in the way people dress in

your country and in the United States?

The Saudis and the Kuwaitis said that people in their countries generally wore their traditional dress. Women in Kuwait, however, did not wear the veil, while Saudi women did.

One of the Saudi women said that she enjoyed the opportunity to be able to go outside without the veil. The other Saudi woman, on the other hand, said that she felt very uncomfortable without the veil. She chose not to wear it, however, in order to avoid the stares of Americans. (In Saudi Arabia women cover their faces completely.)

The Iraqis and Egyptian students affirmed that almost all of the people in their countries wore Westernized clothing. Exceptions mentioned were the Kurds and women in some villages in Iraq and some village women in Egypt.

Question #5. What differences are there in the relationship between men and women in the two countries?

Men and women are largely separated in all four countries. In Saudi Arabia there is complete segregation. In Kuwait men and women may attend classes at the university together and work in the same place; there are, however, no social relationships between men and women who are not in the same family.

In Egypt, men and women are very conservative in their relationships with each other. At the university there is mixing on campus, but off campus there is absolutely no mixing. This situation is, however, slowly beginning to change.

A Kuwaiti student stated that education has played an important role in changing the traditional way of determining marriage partners. While in the past it was exclusively the decision of the parents, today in most cases it is the young people who make the decision. The whole matter, of course, must still be handled by the young people's families. He explained the situation in the following way in his journal:

> In the past and maybe some nowadays all marriages were arranged ones but the new generation is more liberal and most of today's marriages are done after mutual agreement between the man and his woman. Today everybody is educated and the girls have a way in agreeing to the marriage and sometimes in the kind of conditions. Myself, I had to ask her if she wanted to get married and she could agree or reject the proposal. Our custom is to have intermarriage between the same family, but today things are changing and marriage is happening between all the big families.

In the following entry a young woman from Saudi Arabia explained how she met her husband.

My husband Aziz was working with my uncle in the same company. Aziz asked my uncle about my father and if he had a daughter or not. My uncle said that he had two, one the same age as Aziz but me smaller than him by about seven years. Then he asked about me. What am I studying? How is my mother? Where am I studying? How old am I? Many questions about me.

And my father asked about him. Everybody knows him. After that I told my father I wanted to see him and he wanted to see me, too. He came to my father's house and he stayed with my father and my uncle. About me--I gave them coffee and tea. That's all. I was very beautiful that day. I didn't talk with him or sit. I just served the drinks. After one week he came with his father and brother Saud to ask the engagement from my father.

A man from Saudi Arabia recounted how he chose his wife.

> My wife is my friend's sister and her family is a neighbor of my family. I know or see my wife when she was a child but when she became 14 years old her family covered her face and then I didn't see her again. When I thought to marry I talked with my mother about her and my mother agreed. Then we went to her family. Afterwards her family agreed also and we completed the marriage. But in the marriage the girl must agree or accept the man who wants to marry her. If the girl doesn't agree, the marriage is never completed.

A man from Iraq felt very upset that in his country women are still sometimes forced to marry against their will.

> Don't you know that in Iraq or in other Middle East countries the woman still can't choose their fiance whom will be their husband? Because their fathers still force them to marry who they want, not what the girls want. One day when I was in Iraq I was visiting my mother in the hospital and I saw a nice girl sleeping next to my mother. My mother told me that girl had drunk some poisoned liquid because her father forced her to marry a guy so that she was trying to commit suicide.

One of the Egyptian males noted that American women were much freer and their husbands didn't seem to care about them very much. A Kuwaiti male also remarked that the woman in Kuwait was more respected by her husband than the American woman was.

Question #6. What is the role of women in your country?

Most Saudis agreed that the woman's only role should be that of wife and mother.

One of them said that in his country the woman was "a holy person."

> We serve everything outside the house and she gives us everything inside the house. She can't drive because we love her and we don't like her to have any problems. We give her all the love and all the help to live very happy.

In Kuwait women can work wherever they wish with one exception: they cannot be judges. The Kuwaiti women also cannot vote in the country's elections.

In Egypt a woman is able to hold any job she wants, depending on her education and her social class.

The role of Iraqi women is very important for the progress of the country, although their role in society is not as extensive as that of American women. One of the Iraqi males stressed the

importance of women in his country in the following journal entry:

> In Iraq during the last ten years the government has created a lot of opportunities for the woman to study, work, join the army, and ask the man for divorce if she wants that. Anyway, my country needs all the efforts from the man and woman to develop Iraq.
>
> That is why the woman in Iraq has a different role from the woman in the other Arab countries. Our government believes that the development of the country depends on the woman as it depends on the man. That is a principle, not a temporary policy.

Question #7. Has it been difficult for you to practice your religion in a non-Muslim country?

None of the Iraqis cited problems. The Iraqi woman said that she experienced no problems because "Islam is a way of life and I can follow it wherever I am." The Kuwaitis also said that they had no problems.

One of the Saudis said that Islam was an "easy, soft religion." One didn't need to do the difficult parts of it. If one drank alcohol, he said, it was only a minor infraction. Not wearing the veil was also a "minor mistake."

Another Saudi remarked that the greatest problem for him was observing Ramadan, the month in which Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

> In the United States the atmosphere is wrong. You see and feel what you are not supposed to and this could ruin everything. The food preparation is difficult. Instead of breaking the fast after sundown with dates as is done in Saudi Arabia, one has to use French fries. It just isn't the same!

Another problem was the conflict between Friday afternoon classes and the obligation to attend prayers at the mosque at the same time.

The students who were most concerned about religious matters were the Egyptians. They mentioned the impossibility of praying five times a day which is one of the five basic obligations for Muslims. One mentioned that in Cairo, for example, there were announcements to let people know when it was time to pray. In the United States, of course, there were no such reminders.

The Egyptian woman said that since it was difficult for her to pray five separate times, she recited all the prayers together at the end of the day. She expressed dissatisfaction with this solution but had no other. She also mentioned the difficulty of fasting during Ramadan when no one else was in the same situation.

Question #8a. What do you especially like about the United States?

Several students mentioned the legal system and the respect for the law that they found in the United States. (These responses seem to contradict the responses given to the first question.) They also praised the organized nature of the society, the modern technology, the availability of all products, and the ability of the people to use time productively. One student was favorably impressed with the concern for the handicapped and senior citizens.

Question #8b. What don't you like about the United States?

They didn't like the crime, the drugs, the lack of family relations, the excessive freedom of women, the American dislike of foreigners, the food, and the weather (in particular, the snow).

Question #9a: What do you especially like about your own country?

Everyone without exception said that they liked the social system and the family life in their countries. The Egyptians were proud of their educational system which was considered the most advanced in the Arab world and the Iraqis mentioned their university educational system which was free to everyone.

Question #9b. What would you like to change in your country?

The Saudis would like to improve their educational system. The Kuwaitis would like their people to have more respect for the law. The Egyptians would like their country to be cleaner and better organized. The Iraqis would only like to change the weather in their country.

Question #10. Compare university classes in your country and the United States. What are the major differences?

In all four countries the class size is much larger than in the United States.

For the Saudis the major difference was the segregation of the sexes in their schools. One Saudi also mentioned that American students seemed more childish than Saudi students of the same age.

The Egyptians pointed out that in all Egyptian universities there was one continuous academic year rather than semesters or quarters. Students were required to take seven courses each year. All courses were required with no opportunity for students to choose electives.

Question #11. What differences do you see in the teacher-student relationship between the two countries?

All of the students noted that the relationship was more formal and more respectful in their own countries. Teachers were generally stricter and more authoritarian and not as accessible outside of class. One Kuwaiti pointed out that classes were very quiet in his country; only the teacher spoke.

Many were shocked at the behavior of Americans in class. Frequently mentioned was the habit of eating and drinking during class. Also a few students mentioned the poor posture of American students, particularly the way in which many stretched out their legs. One student commented on the fact that American students sometimes interrupted their teachers.

Question #12. What advice would you give to an Arab friend coming to study in the United States?

One of the Saudi women said that she would say, "Don't come! It's difficult for a girl because she'll be homesick."

Some would encourage their friends to make friends with Americans and perhaps other foreign students but would warn them that they would probably be lonely and homesick. The Iraqi woman would advise any Arab friends not to mix with other Arabs.

The most forceful advice came from one of the Egyptians:

> Don't lock yourself up in a shell saying you're an Arab and that you'll be living the Arabic way here and will not communicate with Americans. This is the biggest mistake.

Several students mentioned that it would be advisable to learn English well before coming. Language was a major concern.

Some would advise their friends to be prepared to work hard and would warn them to be as well organized as possible in order not to waste time. "Life is very fast in the United States," wrote one student.

One student said that he would tell his friend to treat his teachers as friends and explain any troubles he faced to them.

Question #13. What advice would you give to American teachers so that they could make the Arab students in their classes feel more comfortable?

Several students mentioned that American professors should take into account the language problems of foreign students. A Saudi student said specifically that professors should speak more slowly and explain any difficult vocabulary items. Another Saudi suggested that the professors help them as much as possible. A Kuwaiti thought that weekly individual meetings outside of class would be very useful in helping foreigners with their academic and personal problems.

It was stressed that foreign students had certain problems that American students did not have. One Iraqi said, "Give them more emotion."

A frequent complaint was that professors knew nothing about Arab culture. It would be flattering, the students said, if professors learned a few Arabic words, the names of some cities, and had some general cultural information. It seems that teachers of English as a foreign language, for example, often used Spanish examples in class but never Arabic ones.

A few students felt that professors did not trust Arab students. The Iraqi woman said, "Be more trusting. Let the students feel more comfortable."

Question #14. Do you think that you will have any difficulty in readjusting to your own culture when you finish your studies here and go back home?

Most of the students felt that they would have no problems.

The Iraqi woman said she enjoyed the freedom to socialize in the United States. In Iraq one must be very guarded in social relationships and she considered this a negative aspect of her society.

The Egyptian woman said that she anticipated difficulty in readjusting to the heavy traffic and crowded buses in Cairo.

She would readjust quickly to the noise, however, because "the silence in the United States drives me crazy!"

One Saudi was concerned that he would have severe readjustment problems because he preferred the American life style. He was, therefore, seriously considering staying in the U.S. permanently.

Another Saudi, however, said the following in response to this question:

> I don't think so because some of the changes I went through are temporary and they will disappear the minute I go back.
>
> You may say I had some difficulties back home in understanding some of the restrictions in my culture but, when I came here, I got the chance to compare and see or wonder if we didn't have those kinds of restrictions wouldn't our life be like here? I came out to the conclusion that there is a reason for everything and I may like the life in the U.S. but I wouldn't like it to be like that in my country. Socially, I always think that we live in glory compared to here and only who lived in there could compare.

Conclusion

The one point that seemed to stand out clearly in the comments made by the students was the preoccupation with human relations. Family and friends were extremely important to these students. The lack of close relationships was very distressing to them.

Faculty and administrators should do all they can to bring these students into contact with the American community while not discouraging their relations with other Arabs. By making special efforts to learn more about the Arab students in order to facilitate their adjustment and to make their lives more pleasant, U.S. universities will enrich the lives not only of the foreign students but also of the American students as well.

About the Author

Christine Meloni is an associate professor of EFL in the English for International Students Program at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. At GWU's commencement ceremonies in May 1989, she received the Columbian College Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Conference Announcements

The Eleventh Annual Second Language Research Forum (SLRF) will be held February 28 to March 3, 1991 at The University of Southern California. The conference theme is "SocioCognitive Approaches to Second Language Acquisition Theory. Topics will include, but are not limited to, the following: sociolinguistics, cognition, gender issues, learnability, language loss, universal grammar, fossilization, classroom effects, minority classrooms, and foreign language. Contact: Constance Gergen, Co-Chair, SLRF 1991, Department of Linguistics, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089-1693. Telephone: (213) 743-2003. FAX: (213) 747 4176. BITNET: GERGEN@USCMVSA

The 1991 TESOL convention will be held March 24-28, 1991 in New York City at the Hilton Hotel. The theme "TESOL, 25 years as an international family" will be highlighted by a TESOL day at the United Nations. At the convention itself, plenaries, papers, workshops, and colloquia will address topics dealing with adult education, applied linguistics, bilingual education, computer-assisted language learning, elementary and secondary education, English as a foreign language, higher education, intensive English programs, program administration, refugee concerns, research, teacher education, teaching English to deaf students, and video. There will also be publishers' sessions, publishers' exhibits, educational visits, and a job placement service. Contact: TESOL Convention Department, 1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Telephone: (703) 836-0774. FAX: (703) 836 7864.

TESL Reporter
Brigham Young University—Hawaii
Box 1830
Laie, Hawaii 96762-1294

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
LAIE, HAWAII
Permit Number One

Address Correction Requested